

Harry Potter and the Prejudiced Statues

The Harry Potter series, by J. K. Rowling introduces many aspects of prejudice and superiority. Different kinds of creatures are introduced throughout the series and they are all considered to be inferior to wizards. The Ministry of Magic is described as having two different statues in the main Atrium at various points in the books. The Fountain of Magical Brethren, which places centaurs, goblins and house-elves as below wizards, is just as insulting as the “Magic is Might” statue that places wizards above humiliated Muggles.

The Fountain of Magical Brethren is described in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* as Harry enters the Ministry of Magic for the first time:

Halfway down the hall was a fountain. A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin, and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard. Glittering jets of water were flying from the ends of the two wands, the point of the centaur's arrow, the tip of the goblin's hat, and each of the house-elf's ears, so that the tinkling hiss of falling water was added to the pops and cracks of Apparators and the clatter of footsteps as hundreds of witches and wizards, most of whom were wearing glum, early-morning looks, strode toward a set of golden gates at the far end of the hall (Order 127).

The blatant offensiveness of the statue at the ministry is made clear by Hermione's claim that "It all [lack of elf rights] stems from this horrible thing wizards have of thinking they're superior to other creatures" (Order 171). Hermione is exactly right on this point! Why are the witch and wizard portrayed as above the other creatures? Goblins, as stated in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, have argued with wizards for centuries over their right to carry wands. Centaurs are certainly not below witches and wizards and, in fact, view themselves as far above them. Unfortunately house elves do see themselves as below witches and wizards, but even they have extremely powerful magical abilities that other magical beings do not possess.

Centaurs like to keep themselves separated from wizards and they avoid them, apart from Rubeus Hagrid, at all costs. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* when Harry enters the forest and is almost attacked by the Quirrell-Voldemort, the centaurs are furious with Firenze for saving Harry. “Firenze!” Bane thundered. “What are you doing? You have a

human on your back! Have you no shame? Are you a common mule?’ ... ‘It is not our business to run around like donkeys after stray humans in our forest!’” (Stone 257). The centaurs are well-aware of Harry and his prophecy with Lord Voldemort, but they feel that there is no reason why one of their kind should become a vehicle for a human or assist him in any way. Hagrid himself even says that centaurs are the “[c]leverest creatures in here” and the centaurs themselves certainly seem to believe it.

In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* there is another very bold example of how centaurs are equal, if not above wizards. Firenze accepts the job as Divination teacher, which was held by the witch Professor Trelawney. This shows that, although he is a centaur, Firenze can and does hold a typically “human” position at the school as an authority figure. Unfortunately, the centaurs see themselves as so much above witches and wizards that they banish Firenze from their herd because he is a disgrace to their kind. In response to being asked about why he cannot return to the forest, Firenze replies “[c]entaurs are not the servants or playthings of humans’ ... ‘I have agreed to work for Professor Dumbledore,’ said Firenze. ‘They see this as a betrayal of our kind’” (Order 602). A centaur is portrayed on the Fountain of the Magical Brethren, although there is no way whatsoever that a centaur would ever look up to a witch or wizard, because the wizarding community is conceited and ignorant.

A goblin is also represented on the fountain as looking adoringly up at the beautiful witch and the noble wizard. When speaking with fellow travelers, Gornuk the goblin says that he is “not a house-elf” (Hallows 296) and Griphook states that he “recognize[s] no wizarding master” (Hallows 296). This indicates that not only do goblins view themselves as equals, or even superiors to wizards, they also view lesser beings, such as house-elves, as below them. The idea of prejudice is not just coming from the wizarding community. More than once goblin rebellions are mentioned throughout the series as goblins are continually rejected the right and choice to carry wands. Goblins are very clever creatures and wizards seem to constantly underestimate them and their drive for equal rights to carry a wand. The Fountain of Magical Brethren just emphasizes the ignorance of the wizarding community in reference to its views on magical creatures.

Though goblins see themselves as superior to wizards, there is not doubt that their customs and traditions are completely different than wizarding customs. Even Bill, who has worked with and personally known goblins for many years, tells Harry that “there is a belief among some goblins, and those at Gringotts are perhaps most prone to it, that wizards cannot be trusted in matters of gold and treasure, that they have no respect for goblin ownership” (Hallows 517). Evidence of this is when Harry, Ron and Hermione attempt to cheat Griphook out of immediately taking ownership of the sword, but he never trusted them to keep their word in the first place. This idea is further enhanced by Ludo Bagman’s continual trickery and elusiveness in his repayment of his gambling debts to three goblins in

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. Goblins are underestimated by wizards and witches, and this is evident by the Fountain of the Magical Brethren.

A house-elf is the final character represented on the fountain and it belongs there just as much as the others. House-elves throughout the series differ greatly on their own views of whether they should be free of their “masters” or not. Dobby hated the Malfoys and always wanted to be free. Winky, however goes into a deep depression and almost psychotic state when she is freed from her family. Also, all of the elves, but Dobby, at Hogwarts find Hermione’s efforts to trick them into freedom with knitted hats. Dobby confides to Harry that “they finds them insulting, sir” (Order 385). House-elves have been driven down in society for so long that even they believe they are below wizards. But they do not belong on the Fountain and their representation there just enhances the idea that wizards see themselves as superior.

During the final fight at Hogwarts Kreacher is leading the house-elves’ attack while yelling “[f]ight, fight for my master, the defender of the house-elves! Fight for master Regulus! Fight!” (Hallows 734). Kreacher is extremely loyal to an understanding and kind master, and Harry has shown respect for Kreacher which has earned his trust. Though Dobby is the only elf in the series who admittedly wants to be freed, Kreacher shows vast movements towards viewing himself as a being who needs to be defended and deserves rights. The Fountain of Magical Brethren misrepresents house-elves, goblins and centaurs in a wizard’s attempt to overshadow other magical beings and creatures.

The Fountain of Magical Brethren is placed directly in the entryway of the Ministry of Magic because the ministry represents a center of power and control over the whole wizarding community. Albus Dumbledore seems to be the only one who has seen the statue that wholly disagrees with it: “[t]he fountain we destroyed tonight told a lie. We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward” (Order 834). Wizards thinking they are superior to other creatures, as represented by the fountain, has led to the centaurs refusing to fight in the final battle and most of the goblins siding with Voldemort. Although the characters in the series accept The Fountain of Magical Brethren as being the norm, it is equally as unjust as the Magic is Might statue that replaces it later.

When Harry, Ron and Hermione enter the Ministry of Magic in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* to retrieve the locket, they find that a new statue had been erected in the place of The Fountain:

A gigantic statue of black stone dominated the scene. It was rather frightening, this vast sculpture of a witch and wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones . . . Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue were the words MAGIC IS MIGHT . . . Harry looked more closely and realized that what he had thought were decoratively carved thrones were actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women, and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted

and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards (Hallows 241-42).

The trio takes in the image of the statue that has been placed under Voldemort's leadership and Hermione realizes that it is Muggles "[I]n their rightful place" (Hallows 242).

Voldemort is hell-bent on purifying the "wizarding race" of Muggle-borns and blood traitors. Even half-bloods are in danger if they cannot procure evidence of their relation's magical abilities. So the "Magic is Might" statue very clearly represents the feelings many witches and wizards that they are better than non-magical people.

Muggles are mentioned often throughout the books, in both positive, negative and neutral ways. Arthur Weasley, who is considered a blood traitor by the Death Eaters, is fascinated with Muggles and wants to interact with them and learn about their lifestyle. While riding the Knight Bus in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* Harry asks the employee Stan Shunpike:

"How come the Muggles don't hear the bus?" said Harry.

"Them!" said Stan contemptuously. "Don't listen properly, do they? Don't look properly either. Never notice nuffink, they don'." (Prisoner 36)

So Stan neither had positive or negative thoughts about Muggles; he just states how things are. During the Quidditch World Cup the Death Eaters decide to torment a family of Muggles for no other reason than for their own enjoyment. The Magic is Might statue adequately represents Voldemort's, the Death Eaters', and their supporters' racist views against non-magical human beings. Whether the prejudice is made against creatures of equal intelligence and power or humans without magical abilities, it is all racism and it is all equally wrong.

The idea of a "Wizarding Race" that is separate from the human race is introduced in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. When Sirius is speaking with Harry about his family history he says "they [Sirius' family] thought Voldemort had the right idea, they were all for the purification of the Wizarding Race, getting rid of Muggle-borns and having purebloods in charge" (Order 112). Sirius, however, does not think this way, nor does he follow any of the ideas of having Voldemort rule the wizarding world. Even the murder of Charity Burbage the Muggle Studies teacher is a huge, and unnecessary, display of the blatant disregard for human life whether it is magical or not. The Magic is Might statue that is erected after Voldemort takes power perfectly represents their views and ideas.

The segregation of blood purity is not just a Death Eater idea in some of the earlier books. The schoolchildren know of Mudbloods and Purebloods and as early as their second year these ideas are introduced. The most ironic thing about the segregation of blood purity levels is that it would be disastrous. Even Ron knows how stupid and ignorant the idea is: "Dirty blood, see. Common blood. It's ridiculous. Most wizards these days are half-blood anyway. If we hadn't married Muggles we'd've died out." (Chamber 116). Neville is descended from one of the very few remaining true pure blood families and yet it takes him

years and years to catch up in magical abilities. Yet, Hermione is the best in her year and can do magic that is extremely advanced for her age. There is no question that the Magic is Might statue is wrong, but it has Muggles literally underneath the witch and wizard which is beyond the offensiveness of the Fountain.

The Fountain of Magical Brethren is supposed to be a beautiful, golden, sparkling, perfect representation of an ideal world in the eyes of witches and wizards. The Magic is Might statue is a bold, black, dark and powerful representation of the power “Purebloods” should have over Muggles. Kingsley Shacklebolt makes the best comment in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: “I’d say that it’s one short step from “Wizards first” to “Purebloods first,” and then to “Death Eaters,”” replied Kingsley. “We’re all human, aren’t we? Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving” (Hallows 440). Ron even comes around during the final battle at Hogwarts and thinks about the house-elves in the kitchens. Both of the statues are misrepresentations of what the leaders of the times believe to be the perfect world. Even though the statues represent discord and prejudice in the wizarding world, their ideas are also defied throughout the series as the community’s sense of equality advances.

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